

ing a sound. On April 12, the nest held its first egg, and both birds were near by. A week later when I visited the cañon, neither of the Kites could be found, and the nest contained naught but a few fragments of shell. The destruction of the eggs was probably accomplished by a ground squirrel, after which the birds deserted the locality.

REPORT OF THE A. O. U. COMMITTEE ON PROTECTION OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS.

YOUR Committee feel that the work done for the protection of birds during the year 1896 has been amply rewarded, and that the results obtained in the various channels of labor have been commensurate with the efforts made. The brief outline of results given below will, we think, be of interest to the members of the Union, and will also be an incentive to an increased activity on the part of the various bodies and individuals who are interested in this most important and necessary work.

MASSACHUSETTS.

Mr. Geo. H. Mackay, of the Committee, reports as follows:

“I have to report for the district coming under my jurisdiction that there is substantial evidence to prove that the enforcement of all protective laws has been a good and wise investment. Two visits to Muskeget Island during the summer gave evidence of the beneficial results of protection, for it is doubtful if in the history of the Massachusetts Terns they have ever been so abundant as during 1896. They have enjoyed a season of unmolested quiet; no eggs have been taken, and only eight birds were shot. The results to be appreciated should be seen. I regret to be compelled to add that the unsettled conditions between the town of Nantucket and the owners of Muskeget, referred to in 1895, still exist, making the work of protection a peculiarly difficult one. The majority of the Selectmen of the town do not oppose

the protection of the Terns. The work in its detail takes both time and effort, and I am convinced that a relaxation of vigilance would be to the decided disadvantage of the birds. The United States Government during the past summer has erected a Life Saving Station on Muskeget Island, the crew employed being on duty except during the months of June and July, when the captain remains there alone. As these two months are the breeding season of the Terns which annually return there, I hope, in the future, to be able to arrange with the Selectmen of Nantucket or the Captain of the Station, or both, to continue the protection of the colony.

“In June I visited Penikese Island, Mass., and made an examination of the large colony of Wilson’s and Roseate Terns domiciled there, estimated to number some six or seven thousand birds. They have been subjected to numerous hardships, having been annually robbed of their eggs up to the 10th of June, after which date they were left more or less undisturbed. This colony of Terns appeals to the best efforts of all who are interested in preserving bird life, especially residents of Massachusetts. I have reason to believe that before the commencement of the next breeding season the owners of the island may be induced to co-operate with others in extending to these Terns the fullest protection, and it is desirable that those interested in such a result will use their influence in bringing about such an end.

“Early in the present year I appeared several times before the Fish and Game Committee at the State House in Boston, urging a new law which I had assisted in formulating, advocating a closer season for some of our Game Birds, and also for the protection of some of our Hawks and Owls. Had any legislation been obtained I believe the statute advocated would have been recommended by the Committee. It is very probable that I may again offer the same bill during the coming season.”

GREAT GULL ISLAND, N. Y.

Protection was given the colony of Terns on Great Gull Island, N. Y., during the past season by Capt. Henry P. Field, the State Game Protector, whose salary was paid by the Linnæan Society, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

and the West Side Natural History Society, all of New York City. Capt. Field reported that the Terns arrived at the island May 11, about four days earlier than usual, that there were large numbers of them, and that it was pretty generally known by the public that they were protected.

This island, being the property of the General Government, and Capt. Field having full charge of it, as well as being the State Game Protector, his authority is recognized and respected.

At the close of the season Capt. Field reported that the Terns left the island September 27,—one day earlier than in 1895. A great many were hatched during the past season, as the colony was not disturbed at all. It is a hard matter to estimate their numbers, but they are very plentiful. I should think that there were about 7000 pairs in the colony.

That the colony has grown very largely is evidenced from the fact that an overflow colony of some hundreds of birds has established itself on the north end of an adjacent island (Gardiners Island). The keeper of Montauk Point Light informs me that the Terns were more numerous about the point during the past summer than for many years. It is proposed by your Committee to continue the protection of this colony until, if possible, the south side of Long Island is again populated with these beautiful birds, as it was before they were practically exterminated in 1886 by the demands of fashion.

NEW JERSEY.

Mr. Stone, of the Committee, reports of the New Jersey coast :

“ I have visited, or have reliable reports from, various points from Point Pleasant to Cape May. I have no record whatever of any *Sterna antillarum*. *S. hirundo* continues in about the same numbers as for several years past. There were about ten pairs breeding between Atlantic City and Brigantine, all back on the salt marshes, and they are reported more plentiful near Avalon. *Larus atricilla* I found breeding on the marshes northwest of Brigantine beach, the colony including about 40 pairs.

“ Another colony is reported from near Sea Isle City. I am sorry to state that fishermen were systematically robbing the nests at Brigantine ; the colony, however, is out of reach of the ordinary

summer visitors, as the water is so shallow that but few yachts ever go up so far. The Clapper Rails were very plentiful, and but little egging was done. Unfortunately, however, there were two very high tides in September which completely flooded the marshes and compelled the birds to swim, when they became easy marks for the pot hunters. It is estimated that 10,000 birds were killed in two days at Atlantic City alone. The market was glutted, and large numbers of the dead Rails went to waste. If a limit to the number shot by one man could be fixed by law it would have an excellent effect.

“The Pennsylvania Audubon Society has only just been organized, and is not yet in working order. Its plan of work will be much the same as the Massachusetts Society, after which it is modeled. Many of the most prominent citizens of Philadelphia have given it their support as honorary Vice-Presidents, and we hope to do some good work.

“During the year I have delivered a number of lectures in Philadelphia and vicinity before schools, societies, etc., on ornithology, and worked with good success to interest persons in the study and protection of birds; the former generally follows the latter, and I think the diffusion of ornithological information in this way a very important matter. Mrs. Olive Thorne Miller’s course of lectures in the city last spring was productive of good results.

“Finally, I would report that the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club has a Committee on Protection of Birds, which is prepared to deal with any questions which may be brought to its notice.”

ILLINOIS.

Mr. Ruthven Deane, of the Committee, reports as follows:

“In regard to the present use of birds for millinery purposes, I have made considerable investigation, having been introduced to a number of our largest and best-posted firms in that business. The result of my inquiries is that while feathers and plumes are extensively used in the trimming of hats, few, if any, native birds, aside from the Egret, are now used.

“The majority of the feathers are from pigeons and chickens, and are dyed. I cannot find, as reported by Miss Merriam, that any artificial heads and beaks are made of celluloid.

“The rage for the Egret plumes is greater than ever, and in the past sixty days the price has advanced over one hundred per cent. At present the fashion is principally to use the stub half of the plume, although the tips and finer ends are also used, but to a less extent, naturally being considerably higher in price.

“Our city taxidermists advise me that they have had little or no order work for millinery purposes in the past year, and such as they have had has not been for insectivorous birds, and that they do not employ boys to shoot specimens, as was once their custom.

“The proprietor of one of our large wholesale millinery stores informed me that a feather and plume dealer with whom he used to do business had ceased fitting out any further expeditions, he having lost heavily on former ventures.

“About the only heads of birds that have been in use in the past year have been those of some foreign Blackbirds and Sparrows, which have been principally imported from France. The quills of one or two species of Pheasants, probably from China, are also more or less in fashion. The birds are imported in the skins, so as to save the duty on manufactured goods, and the tail, composed of eighteen feathers, commands quite a large price.

“Really the only destruction that is now going on among our native birds is evidently among the Herons and Egrets, and, while this has been on the increase for the present fashion of this spring (1896), the general opinion is that it will die out, not to return to the extent that has heretofore prevailed.

“I have recently been using my influence upon a number of ignorant country boys, who have annually made a great depredation among the Herons in what is known as ‘Crane Heaven,’ on the Kankakee River, in Indiana, and, while my influence was only on a moral basis, several promised to desist from any wanton destruction this year. Two gunners would visit the heronry once or twice during the summer and slaughter from sixty to eighty Great Blue Herons in a day, leaving them where they fell on the ground.

“The Game Laws of Illinois last year were more carefully enforced than for many years, and a great many arrests were made among idle boys who were shooting small species, such as Robins, Woodpeckers, etc. I think the same watchfulness will be continued this year.”

In a later communication Mr. Deane writes as follows :

“Fashion in feather ornamentation has not materially changed since I wrote you in detail in the spring. We occasionally see the heads or wings of some of our native species worn in their natural color, yet the tame Pigeon and Egret head the list in this section of the country.

“I wrote you before that I had endeavored to use influence in the protection of Herons in a certain ‘Crane Heaven’ on the Kankakee River in Indiana. During two trips in the past two weeks in that region I find, quite to my satisfaction, that no raids were made on the heronry last spring and summer, as had yearly been the custom of the native boys and, I am sorry to say, some so-called sportsmen. My appeal may have done some good, but the fact that a bad fire played havoc in the woods near the heronry, made the approach much more difficult. The location where the Night Herons bred, a long stretch of low ‘pucker brush’ bordering the marsh, was wiped out by fire, but the birds evidently found another favorable site, for they are much more abundant now than I have seen them in years.

“I have been living this summer at Highland Park, a small town twenty-five miles up the Lake shore. The authorities have taken strict action against the killing of insectivorous and song birds, and have posted that section of the law on the trees and public buildings of the town. The unusual abundance of many of the summer resident birds is no doubt the result of the enforcement of the law.”

CALIFORNIA.

Mr. Leverett M. Loomis reports for California as follows : —

“Several days ago I sent you a ‘separate,’ giving some account of the havoc that is being made by the light keepers among the sea birds on South Farallon Island — the sale of eggs to collectors

threatening the extermination of the Petrels, and the market trade the extermination of the Murres and Gulls.

“I write now seeking the aid of the A. O. U. in putting an end to this nefarious traffic. Two steps are needful:

“1. A California law must be secured prohibiting the sale of wild birds’ eggs. This will stop the shipping of eggs to the markets.

“2. An order must be obtained from the U. S. Lighthouse Board instructing the Farallon keepers to stop gathering eggs, and to keep off possible poachers that might want eggs for their own consumption.

“A committee from the California Academy of Sciences can attend to the California law. I shall present the matter in a lecture I am to deliver on the Farallons, October 19, before the Academy.

“It remains for the A. O. U. to secure the action of the Lighthouse Board.

“All this can be accomplished this fall, and another season the birds will be allowed to breed, and the rookeries will be preserved. Kindly send me copies of the New York and Massachusetts laws relating to bird protection, especially of sea birds.”

(A popular article, confirming Mr. Loomis’s statement regarding the wanton destruction of eggs on the Farallons, appeared in ‘Leslie’s Popular Monthly,’ New York, November, 1896, pp. 589–597 — ten illustrations.)

In response to Mr. Loomis’s appeal for aid, your Chairman at once wrote to the Lighthouse Board as follows:—

NEW YORK, Oct. 3, 1896.

THE HON. SECRETARY LIGHTHOUSE BOARD,
Washington, D. C.

DEAR SIR:—

As Chairman of the American Ornithologists’ Union Committee on the protection of North American Birds, I deem it my duty to call to your attention an abuse that you have power to abate, *i. e.*, the destruction of the eggs of certain sea birds that breed on South Farallon Island.

I send you herewith a copy of a letter received from Prof. Loomis, of the California Academy of Sciences, together with a copy of a paper written by him on California birds in which, on pp. 356–358, he calls attention to the abuse.

I assume that the island in question belongs to the Government, and as the lightkeeper is a public servant in the employ of the Government, drawing a salary for a specific purpose, he has no right to engage in any commercial pursuit, especially when it is so harmful in its effects.

This destructive work can be easily stopped if the Lighthouse Board will issue an order to the keeper of the South Farallon Light prohibiting him from engaging in eggging, and also authorizing him to prevent all other persons from eggging on the Government property.

I feel assured that your Board are in sympathy with this work, from the fact that some four years since, by authority of the Lighthouse Board, Capt. Henry P. Field, of the Little Gull Island Light, N. Y., was allowed to be appointed as Special Game Protector under the New York State laws for the purpose of protecting the colony of Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) and Roseate Terns (*Sterna dougalli*) on Great Gull Island.

The protection afforded this colony of Terns has increased it more than four-fold and necessitates no action on the part of the Lighthouse Keeper except to inform egggers that the birds are protected.

I trust that your honorable Board will see fit to issue the order asked for, and I shall be pleased to have a communication from you to that effect so that I may so report to Prof. Loomis and to our Society.

An immediate reply was received, as follows :

Treasury Department,

Office of the Lighthouse Board.

WASHINGTON, 7 October, 1896.

MR. WILLIAM DUTCHER,

Chairman of the American Ornithologists' Union Committee,

No. 525 Manhattan Avenue, New York, N. Y.

SIR : —

Your letter of 3d of October, 1896, relative to the sale of wild birds' eggs, by employes of the Lighthouse Establishment, on South Farallon Island, Cal., has been received.

In reply, the Board has to state that your letter, together with its enclosures, was referred this date to the district officers of the 12th Lighthouse District for enquiry, and for a joint report to the Board upon the subject.

The co-operation of the Biological Survey of the Department of Agriculture has been promised in case the appeal to the Lighthouse Board is not successful.

LOWER CALIFORNIA.

Mr. A. W. Anthony, of San Diego, Cal., appealed early in the year to the Committee, through Mr. Stone, for aid to prevent the

extermination of the Herons of Lower California. The following extracts are from letters from Mr. Anthony to Mr. Stone, dated April 5 and May 3, 1896.

“I see by the January ‘Auk’ that you are a member of the new Committee on Protection of North American Birds. The subject is one in which I have been, and still am, very much interested; of late, however, I have about given up ever seeing anything done for the few Herons that are left. The fact that a new Committee has been appointed would seem to indicate that something was to be done, but *what?* Has any plan been proposed?

“I have for several years thought of all sorts of impossible plans for protection, but could never hit upon anything that I thought would do any good. If we could get one or two journals like ‘Harper’s Bazar’ to cry down the custom of wearing birds, advising something in their place, the fight would be short. I think that about half the women who wear Heron plumes honestly believe they are not feathers; and then, also, education is needed. I often, when I scold at such head-wear, am somewhat taken down by: ‘The idea! that ‘aigrette’ never saw a bird. They are simply manufactured feathers,’ etc.

“The slaughter has begun here on this coast in all its glory. Eastern firms are sending out great inducements to anyone they think will hunt or buy for them. Papers like the San Francisco ‘Call,’ etc., in their Sunday editions, print accounts several columns in length of how someone made some fabulous sum in a few weeks shooting Herons for their plumes ‘which are worth several times their weight in gold,’ etc., and every such article does vast harm.

“As a result, all the Indians on the Colorado River below Yuma, and many white men also, are hard at work killing off the birds that nest in considerable numbers on the islands in the delta and along the extensive lagoons of that region. This year they have got into Magdalena Bay, where countless thousands have heretofore nested in safety, but at the rate they are now being killed they cannot last long.

“I have carefully avoided publishing anything regarding the very extensive nesting colonies of Terns, Herons, etc., of Lower

California, fearing that it would result in their being set upon by plume hunters, but I think I have had my trouble for nothing. There was a good deal of talk last spring of outfitting one or more large schooners here and taking a lot of hunters to the Mexican coast below San Blas, where lagoons extend for a hundred miles or more along the beach and vast rookeries are known to exist, but other business came up at that time and the schooners did not go; however, they will go as soon as times get dull again.

“I think it is in the power of the Secretary of the Interior, or of Customs, to put a stop to all such work in twenty-four hours. There would be little use, I think, in trying to do anything with them in a political way, but if the right parties were approached personally, *i. e.*, not in their official capacity, it might work, and, if so, would do a great deal toward helping us in the United States. I shall be interested in hearing what your Committee is doing.

“I think a good plan would be for a Committee of some scientific society to prepare a letter, setting forth in strong language the damage done to our Herons in Florida, and the fact of these same plume hunters being now engaged in similar work in Mexico. I think it is now unlawful to take plumes in Florida. If so, that would have its good effect, as they like to follow our lead. You cannot make it too strong, and by appealing to them in person,—the Governors of two or three States,—you would make a strong friend of each. If one could be made to stop the work in his State, I think by a very little work the rest would be induced to follow, and so stop it all over Mexico. Such letter should be endorsed by as many scientific societies as possible, which would make it very impressive. . . .

“We have a very good class of farmers in Southern California, at least; they object strongly to having Hawks and Owls shot, and give them all the protection one could ask.

“Cold storage doesn't cut any figure in this State,—all game must be disposed of at once and possession, even in cold storage, is the same as killing in the close season, even if shipped from Mexico.

“I think the egg traffic should be stopped, however, at San Francisco, especially as it does a great deal of damage to the sea fowl.

“If I can be of use at any time I shall be glad to furnish any aid possible.”

Following the suggestion of Mr. Anthony, strong letters to the proper authorities, urging the protection of all Herons, were sent through Mr. Stone, and by Prof. J. A. Allen in behalf of the Linnæan Society of New York, to whose attention the matter was brought. No report of the direct results obtained has been received as yet.

AUDUBON SOCIETIES.

Very valuable work is being done, and will be done in the future, by the Audubon Societies which have been established, or are now in process of organization. The first of these, the Massachusetts Audubon Society, was organized in 1886. As each one is planned on the same lines, and with the same objects in view, a quotation from the prospectus of the Massachusetts Society will serve to give the character of the work hoped to be accomplished.

“The purpose of the Society is to discourage buying and wearing for ornamental purposes the feathers of any wild bird, and to otherwise further the protection of our native birds. We would awaken the community to the fact that this fashion of wearing feathers means the cruel slaughter of myriads of birds, and that some of our finest birds are already decimated, and may ultimately be exterminated by the demand for their feathers. We would make an appeal to all lovers of nature, since by this reckless demand of fashion the woods and fields are being stripped of one of their chief attractions, and the country deprived of indispensable friends to agriculture.”

Any person is eligible for membership who is willing to subscribe to the following simple pledge: “Being in sympathy with the principles of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, I hereby agree not to purchase or encourage the use of feathers of wild birds for ornamentation.” A very small fee is required of members, the same being used solely for the purpose of printing and disseminating the necessary literature of the subject. Societies similar to the above are now actively working in Philadelphia and Chicago, and I am pleased to state that one is in

process of formation in New York. As a striking sign of the influence of the Massachusetts Society, it may be stated that one of the fashionable milliners of Boston is a member of the Society and, consequently, will not sell the plumage of wild birds to her customers.

A large and influential Society, having for its object the protection of birds has existed for some years in England, the President being the Duchess of Portland, and the Secretary, Mrs. F. E. Lemon, Hillcrest, Redhill, England. The literature issued by the English Society has been sent to your Committee, and is found to be very complete. A large part of it, with some modification, could be adopted by the American Societies to advantage.

At a recent International Congress for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals it was decided to found, in the various countries represented at the Congress, children's societies for the protection of those birds which are now killed in such vast numbers for the sake of adorning with their plumage feminine hats and dresses.

While legislation may be of vast benefit in protecting all bird life, yet we firmly believe that the true solution of the problem will be the education of the children of our schools, both public and private. They should be taught in every grade, from the kindergarten to the college, not only the æsthetic but the economical value of our birds. To this end the Division of the Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture, has issued a very valuable paper (Circular No. 17) which should be in the hands of every teacher and educator on this continent, with an urgent appeal that the suggestions in the circular be carried out to the fullest extent. When we have educated our children laws will be unnecessary.

In conclusion, your Committee asks to be continued with the power to add to its numbers from the members of the Society, and suggests that each one of the 600 members of the Union shall take an active interest in this work during the coming year, especially in distributing 'Circular No. 17,' and in the formation of local societies in the localities in which they may reside.

Respectfully submitted :

WILLIAM DUTCHER,
Chairman.